

## **CHAPTER VII**

### **CHILDREN'S PERSPECTIVES ON THE HALLWAY**

Qualitative research characteristically endorses holism, an emphasis on the totality of events and the surrounding context. Holism contrasts with a concentration on discrete variables analyzed independently of one another. Many qualitative researchers emphasize that the whole of a phenomenon is more than the sum of the parts, underscoring the constant change occurring in the world and lack of simple cause-and-effect relationships in a social system (Patton, 1990, pp. 49-53, 78-82).

Ethnographic research emphasizes holism because of its anthropological roots (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993, p. 5). Yet Johnson and Johnson (1990) believe that anthropologists--and perhaps qualitative researchers in general--are becoming less holistic in their research partially because of increased specialization. The idea of holism can be confusing and vague when viewed from the vantage point of the standard scientific paradigm. Research design based on the latter tends to be too focused, Johnson and Johnson claim, and statements and events that do not fit the research design are ignored.

The hallway is a dynamic, ever-changing system in which individual and social behavior constantly interacts with the context. In the last chapter I attempted to portray my own holistic perspective of the hallway studied as summarized on the first day and elaborated afterward. In this chapter I attempt to capture some of the holistic views of the hallway shared by children. I do not claim to have captured every aspect of any child's worldview. This is impossible because no person can become another person, even as researchers attempt to be as *emic* as possible. Further, the form of the protocols and the questions asked tend to constrain and otherwise influence the responses people make. Yet those responses can be summarized to reflect what may be a portion of what children intended to convey of their reality, although the summary also reflects the researcher's own processing and organizing as well.



### The Big Picture

The first question in most of the interviews was an open-ended request to describe all the things the children had seen in the hallway. This was partially to discover what I had missed in earlier observations, as well as determine what they thought were important events. I asked the children to talk about both common and rare events they had seen and experienced.

As might be expected from the nature of general child development, children in fourth and fifth grades tended to give more responses and use greater detail in their responses than younger children would. What I did not expect was the high number of hostile behaviors described by both girls and boys. Although girls often spoke of being the receivers of aggression and boys as givers, there were some boys who spoke of girls from whom they had received hostility and girls who admitted to being aggressors.

The most common form of aggression mentioned, and generally the first response given by groups, was fighting and synonyms such as "bustin' people." This is interesting because in all the hours of observing I did not observe a single fight, although one day many children and adults told me about a major fight just before school started. However, I did see brief altercations lasting five seconds or less and plenty of rough-and-tumble play. This suggests that fighting is definitely salient in children's minds, regardless of its frequency or duration. It may be that some children confused the appearance of aggression in rough-and-tumble play with actual fighting; unpopular boys are more likely to confuse the two (Pellegrini, 1989a, 1989b). Even those who could distinguish the two, however, may have used "fighting" to describe it, perhaps because they lacked a more precise descriptor.

Very few teacher behaviors were named in this initial listing. The three noted were paddling, mentioned by almost every group of children, "teacher gettin' on us," and the "teacher takin' names." Peer behavior and the physical context of the hallway were far more salient to kids.

Many of the behaviors listed by children I did not observe in the hallway. Some of these

were fairly rare, by the youngsters' own admission. I also discovered on one occasion that children were describing some behaviors they had observed or heard about at hallways at other schools. These were deleted from the present listing when this was determined. There is also the possibility that some of these were fabrications, because they all took place during the initial interview prior to building significant rapport. Most of the behaviors listed, however, "ring true" to what was observed and heard discussed.

There are numerous ways in which these behaviors could be categorized. Lancy (1993, p. 62) notes that fourth and fifth graders think in terms of a five category taxonomy of activities, two of which are probably most likely during hallway transitions: fooling/messing around--many of the subcategories of this apply to transitions--and helping--only one subcategory, "helping a friend," seems applicable to transitions. Nearly all these categories and subcategories listed by children are social, for example, talking, bugging, fighting. In contrast, Pellegrini (1990) observed ten categories of behavior on playgrounds, seven of which would seem likely to occur in transitions: passive-noninteractive, passive interactive, observer directed, aggressive, distress, rough-and-tumble, and certain aspects of vigorous play, such as walking, running, and walk/follow. One aspect of object play, throwing an object, might also be observed.

Instead of following any of these or other worthwhile systems, I decided to have my children classify the behaviors mentioned. I turned to my two sons, John, age twelve, and Stephen, age ten, who have more of a child's eye view than I do. They were not students at Pellegrini elementary, so they cannot be considered emic to that context. However, they recognized the behaviors listed by children at Pellegrini elementary and did categorize them, although--as is described subsequently--they did not quickly agree with one another on categorizations. My children have contact with peer cultures somewhat different from that of Pellegrini elementary, although peer culture has considerable continuity from one location to another. This is evident in the accounts of peer culture in Israel (e.g., Kalekin-Fishman, 1987) and among Australian children, many of them Aborigines (e.g., Davies, 1982), emphasizing the many similarities to accounts of peer cultures in the United States. To the degree that the peer culture of Pellegrini elementary differs from the peer culture in which my children participate, they are outsiders who bring something different to the analysis; yet their categorization of the behaviors corroborates and triangulates the listings of Pellegrini elementary children. They are children looking at what other kids say they do, and thus there is comparability of perspectives. They also viewed several of my videotapes of Pellegrini elementary while doing reliability checks, so they gained some familiarity with that context as well even though not actually participants in the school's peer culture. Researchers using their own children in data analysis has been suggested by Davies (1982, p. 2), and the influence a fieldworker's children can have on research is underscored by several authors in Cassell (1987).

My children were eager to participate in the categorizing. I wrote each of the events named by children on separate cards and asked my children to categorize and subcategorize them in any way they thought best. The broadest categories were developed by my elder son. The largest category, which initially he thought should not be subdivided, was "cruel or violent actions against the school or each other," which was then subdivided by my younger son with a bit of help from his older brother. I asked John to revise the categories and the listing of terms under each category. Then I gave his revision to Stephen and asked him to do the same. After

**Figure 1 Childrens' Listings of Hallway Activities, My Children's Categories**

<p><b>I. results of your actions</b></p> <p>paddling (by teacher) teacher getting on us getting in trouble getting sick (could be) getting hurt (could be) falling (could be)</p> <p><b>II. being nice and good [emic]</b></p> <p>being quiet measuring (for class project) looking at stuff on the walls looking through windows (empty the) trash doing school work bringing school work whispering walking staying in line</p> <p><b>III. romance</b></p> <p>kissing holding hands boy gives girl money but she doesn't like him</p> <p><b>IV. disobeying</b></p> <p>talking trading eating candy eating candy off floor laughing dipping (tobacco) cussing shooting birds (making an obscene gesture)</p> <p><b>A. being wild/wound up or bored</b></p> <p>playing acting like monkeys dancing acting like Michael Jackson acting cool sneaking away</p>	<p>riding horseback on shoulders hitting signs with "teachers" names stuffing things in the water fountain putting paper clips in electrical sockets yelling and screaming pushing (in line) acting up wrestling shoving</p> <p><b>1. papers</b> (throwing) paper airplanes throwing paper balls (at people) (playing "baseball") with paper wads and hitting with hand</p> <p><b>2. doors</b> hanging from door frame pounding on doors kicking doors knocking on doors slamming doors</p> <p><b>3. walls</b> writing on walls jumping up the walls knocking on walls throwing things against the walls kicking against the walls hitting head against the wall punching or kicking the walls knocking papers off walls</p> <p><b>4. posts</b> [Stephen noted that "jumping on posts" could also go here] swinging around posts climbing posts</p> <p><b>5. running [emic]</b> trampling or running over people racing horseplay</p>
--	---

<p>6. <i>jumping</i> [emic]      jumping over people      jumping into trash can      "slam dunk" trash can      jumping on posts</p> <p>7. <i>making hallway look dirty</i>      littering      (defacing) artwork in hallway      writing on strips (that hold papers)</p> <p>8. <i>spitting</i> [emic]      spitting water</p> <p>9. <i>doing things to windows</i>      banging on windows      making faces through windows</p> <p>10. <i>doing things with clothing</i>      taking off shoes and throwing them      playing keep away with hats and shoes</p> <p><b>B. violent or cruel actions towards each other</b>      pulling ears      choking somebody      poking in the eye</p>	stabbing with pencils having a knife pulled on you calling people names making fun of people kicking people messing with little kids eating other people's candy talking back/smarting off grabbed by neck hitting (person) punching aggravation being mean fighting tripping
	<p><b>V. other stuff you see or hear</b></p> <p>dog in hallway      arguments      pennies      hearing a TV      teacher taking names      rabbit in hallway      fussing      noises      "bunny hop" (hopping while in line, done by first graders imitating teacher)</p>

All Girls Group		All Boys Group		Mixed Sex and Race Group	
WHITE	BLEND	WHITE	BLEND		
<b>Third Grade</b>	fighting acting up running talking school work pole climbing jump and hit door frame hang from door frame		running fighting noise playing yelling cussing punch walls hit hand against wall racing climb or swing around pole	fighting tripping running talking cussing be rude yelling	running playing act nice fighting look at things make faces be naughty cussing jumping pushing kick walls hang on doors jump on/climb poles pick on people write on walls jump in trash bang on windows wave arms [et al.]
<b>Fourth Grade</b>	group one: kicking walls, doors push people choking stuff things in water fountain spitting tripping running group three: fighting shouting eating running talking making faces writing on walls paddling making fun [et al.]			running fighting name calling kicking punching jumping pushing tripping talking throwing things noises play keep away	fighting arguing running cussing playing running slamming doors talking back kissing holding hands horseplay wrestling paddling tripping falling
<b>Fifth Grade</b>	fighting pick on people pulling ears punching tripping talking paddlings make fun shooting birds	fighting running talking laughing kicking screaming get in trouble get sick hold hands cussing	fighting pencil poking pushing cussing kicking cut downs dog & rabbit came in paddling hitting writing on strip	fighting trampling pushing kicking write on walls running talking	

Figure 7. Hallway Activities According to Children Listed by Group

additional negotiating and refining of categories and designations within categories, in which I participated but did not have the final say, Figure Six was created. Most of these also are summarized by group and grade level in Figure Seven. **Summation**

I am not completely satisfied with these categories, because they fall short of being mutually exclusive and exhaustive, ideals for typologies suggested by Lofland and Lofland (1984, p. 96). But I am satisfied that this organization is close to children's perspectives, at least my children's perspectives. In Figure Five the term *emic* is written next to words that came from the original comments from the groups interviewed.

### **Purposes and Reasons**

During several of the interviews I asked children about the purposes or reasons for some of the events they described. At other times youngsters spontaneously offered explanations for some of the events listed. Examining these responses permits a deeper level of understanding of children's perspectives.

#### **Calling Names**

When a third grader spoke of children calling one another names, the only explanation offered was that they did so because they were mad at each other. Fifth graders suggested that *making* a peer angry was the motivation for ridicule; they "like to see other people feel bad" and in this "they take after their mom." Another possibility offered by a fifth-grade girl was

Sometimes they think their friends are going after other friends, so they're jealous, so they put down someone else.

This comment is consistent with Davies's (1982, pp. 70-76) idea of "contingency friends" among children.

#### **Punching the Walls**

Another third-grade group indicated that children sometimes punched the walls of the hallway because of anger. Perhaps, "They don't like the way they are," one guessed. These youngsters also suggested that it might be a way of getting attention. They went on to explain that other people nearby might laugh at the spectacle. This might also be an attempt to get others to like them, they suggested.

#### **Running**

A fourth-grade girl, when asked how she felt when running down the hall, indicated what may be a common reason for this behavior, "I be havin' fun." Another third-grade girl said kids run in the hall "to beat someone, to have a race." Sometimes kids run to catch up with others who have left them behind. Children also run in the hall to get to the bus before it leaves, a fourth-grade girl indicated. One fifth grader gave an obvious reason for running in the hallway, "to get somewhere." Having fun, getting away from others, and being friends were other reasons cited by this group for running in the hall. A fourth grader suggested that some children run over others simply because they do not look where they are going.

#### **Fights**

What produces fighting in the hallways? Several fourth graders commented that kids start fights sometimes to get attention or simply "because they are bad." One girl attributed transference to a boy in her class who became angry with other kids or the teacher and took it out on her, when she was not doing anything to him. A fifth grader told this story:

[Student]: There's this little bitty fourth-grade kid. He makes me pretty mad. He brags. He got a bunch of stuff. He always brags. I checked him up on the bus and we got in a fight.

[DR]: You got into a fight because he was bragging?

[Student]: He was bragging, he kicked me.

[DR]: Uh huh.

[Student]: I can't stand him. He brags all the time. He wouldn't stop. He said he drove off a twenty foot hill on his motorcycle and it didn't even hurt him.

[DR]: Hmm.

[Student]: Must have had some springs on his motorcycle.

[Others laugh.]

This group also suggested that flirting, the designation they used, between a boy and girl could also start an altercation: "Stick your tongue out at her, she'll smack you upside the face."

In another fifth-grade group a girl complained about a boy who hit her and poked her in the eye. She became a bit psychological as she analyzed why he might have done these things:

It happens because something happens at home and they aren't real happy about that, so they take it out on other people. Also they take after their parents; it happens at home.

One member of this group of girls also commented on a girl not in their group, attributing misbehavior to her background:

Debby gets in trouble always beatin' up on people, try to act cool, 'cause she's adopted.

A fifth grader suggested that retribution was sometimes behind kicking another person; the desire to "get even" was a strong influence. A fourth-grade girl said that sometimes people pick fights to force others to give them answers, perhaps to test questions.

### **Writing on the Strips**

Some fifth-grade boys mentioned that children often wrote on the cork held by the metal strips in the hall. When I asked why they did that, one said, "To like, say, you can't talk in the hall or something, they write on it, that right there, to take a [inaudible--perhaps a phone number]" (the unclear words were followed by laughter by the whole group).

### **Hallway Behavior in General**

Several interview groups commented on misbehavior in general in the hallway. "They act like parents at home," offered one third grader. Another third grader told me that having an "attitude" came from "troubles at home that make them mad." He went on to say that they might "get beat at home" or by someone outside the home, which made them mad and so they brought that anger with them to school. A group of fifth-grade boys suggested that getting attention was a major reason for what occurred in the hallway.

### **Summation**

I am impressed that many of the purposes and reasons for hallway activities reflect elements of peer culture. Having fun and being friends with others reflect this emphasis most clearly. I found the comment interesting that children wrote on the metal strip because talking was prohibited; strict prohibitions against an aspect of peer culture produced an even less desirable expression of peer culture. Children also provided a wide array of more psychological answers: anger, gaining attention, getting even, and parental influence through both modeling and transference. The motivations listed are multiple and complex, and children realize there are many reasons for the events in the hallway.

### **Feelings About Hallway Events**

Purposes and reasons for activities often blend with children's feelings about what happens. How do children feel about hallway events, either as they observe them or participate in them?

The feelings expressed by third graders neatly fit into two broad categories, positive and negative feelings. Third-grade girls expressed predominantly negative reactions: guilt if you do not do as expected, sadness if caught running, embarrassment if seen by a teacher misbehaving. One girl said that when a fight occurred, "I feel sorry for them because one of them will get hurt or in

trouble."

Third-grade boys were more positive. Though fighting could make you angry, one commented,

I feel cool, start cheering for someone you like. I'd walk away if I didn't know them. It's interesting; I'd make bleachers [so I can have] a front row seat.

It felt good to run, a third-grade boy commented, "Makes me feel neat, like a race car driver." But you might feel guilty if caught; you "Get this feeling in your stomach like I'm gonna get in trouble."

The only boy in a fourth-grade mixed-sex mixed-race group commented that seeing kids run down the hall made him "want to slap 'em, I want to woop 'em, put 'em in a garbage can and ship 'em to [whispered] Iraq." When I asked the same group how it felt when *they* ran down the hall, a girl admitted, "I be havin' fun."

In contrast an all-white group of fourth-grade girls was more negative. Seeing people run in the halls resulted in anger and fear because "they might run into you." Likewise a boy tripping them caused anger, while older kids "pickin' on us" caused fear. One of these girls said that she was embarrassed to be in the hall when there were visitors in the school because of the misbehavior of the other children. How would *they* feel running? "It would make me feel terrible. [I] wouldn't be happy."

Through an oversight, none of the fifth-grade groups was asked about their feelings in the hallways. Most of the third- and fourth-grade girls reflected more negative feelings while the boys expressed more positive feelings about hallway events, with the exception of some girls and boys in mixed-sex and mixed-race groups who expressed somewhat divergent views about misbehavior. These divergencies may reflect characteristics that made them more likely to be included in a mixed group. Interestingly the few positive feelings about hallway events by girls were from three African American youngsters who were thought by some of the children interviewed to be the "toughest" of all the kids, not just girls, in the class. This reminded me of an African American girl who was described as joining the "boys' culture" in a classroom at another school (Thorne, 1993, p. 97). Grant (1992) notes that first and second grade girls are socialized into different feminine roles according to race, with emphasis on loyalty, deference, and intellect for white girls while African American girls are encouraged in social skills more than intellectual activities by their teachers. Grant maintains that the latter girls are consigned to the periphery of the teacher's attention, while white girls are of central concern particularly to white teachers. The three African American girls undoubtedly aggravated others in dozens of ways, as did many white and African American boys, a common practice in the hallways of Pellegrini elementary, and a regular source of frustration to white girls. This aggravation is described by Hanna (1982) as "meddlin'," a form of aggression which she found to be common among African American children and a regular source of tension between African American and white children.

### Areas of the Hall

Do children see the hallway as one place or several? When I asked them, most of the groups responded that it was only one place. Several groups distinguished between the early elementary hallway and the main hallway studied, or between those halls and the middle section of the school, but few saw their hallway as several places. However, when I asked if there were different areas *in* the hallway, a few groups offered some suggestions.

A third-grade group identified the water fountain area, the bathroom area, classroom doorways, and the inside and outside doorways as general locations in the hallway, in addition to classrooms and other areas outside the hallway. A fourth- grade group only described restrooms, the art room, and places other than the hallway. The restrooms were the only distinctive area in the hallway to one fifth grade group of boys, because it is "where the fights begin." A group of fifth-grade girls saw the drinking fountain area and restrooms as linked because they were "where everyone hangs out and makes fun of you." One of these girls especially emphasized alleged violence in the boys restroom; "I'm just glad I'm not a boy," she concluded.

It may be that this question was not well understood by children. Perhaps they confused

the physical architectural distinctions in a hallway, of which there are few, with the social distinctions, of which there are many. It surprises me that they did not even separate the sixth-grade area of the hallway, an area they rarely frequented, except occasionally to go outside the building, and about which they expressed many negative reactions, particularly about the sixth graders' noise and misbehavior. Yet perhaps these social distinctions are not as important and prominent in the thinking of elementary children, with the possible exceptions of the restrooms, drinking fountains, classroom entryways, and doorways to the outside and middle section of the school.

### **Rules of the Hallway**

In most of the interview groups, my initial question about the rules of the hallway often met with restatements of what they said earlier about hallway activities in general, only expressed in a negative frame. For example, one of the most common rules cited was that running was prohibited, while one of the most commonly described behaviors in the hallway was running. This points to the salience of the forbidden. I consider here rules implied in the discussion related to this question, though not those described or implied in other contexts.

#### **General Hallway Rules**

The most named hallway rule was "don't run," with 11 out of 12 groups (92%) naming it, often the first rule mentioned. The second most common was "don't fight" (67%) followed by "don't talk" (42%), "don't chew gum," and "don't yell" (each 33%). The percentage for the "don't talk" rule is a bit misleading because some children probably meant that by saying you should "be quiet" or "don't make noise," which were tabulated separately because these can also refer to nonvocal noises. If the groups making the latter comments are added to the total, the "don't talk" rule accounts for 67% of the total. In addition some children gave milder versions of the rule such as "don't talk loud" or "don't talk while class is going on"; adding these to the don't talk category raises the percentage to 67%, and the number of groups making any of these comments about talking totals 92%. However, even if I include the "yelling" category, one group still remains that did not make any comment about vocalization in the hallway--the third-grade mixed-gender mixed-race group.

A number of rules listed by children were more esoteric, perhaps reflecting some specific situation or possibly a vivid imagination. These included not beating the wall, not climbing the wall, "no puking," not shooting paper towels, not writing on or tearing down artwork, not making faces at teachers, no bringing guns to school, and not messing up people's hair.

A comprehensive listing of general hallway rules is provided in the left column of Figure Eight. Included are the number of groups (out of 12) naming the category, as well as the grade level for items only listed once. As noted, most of the rules are framed in the negative.

Why are there so many rules? This reflects the control implicit in school culture. High control by teachers exists because children are assumed to behave in an unacceptable manner otherwise (Goetz, 1975, p. 175). Child-initiated events can be perceived as "lapses of control" by teachers (Kalekin-Fishman, 1987, p. 99). The control aspect of transitions are also emphasized by LeCompte (1980). Teachers are, over the year, increasingly seen by kindergartners as disciplinarians. Youngsters also describe other aspects of the teacher's role in terms of management--teachers take them to the restroom, let them go outside, escort them to the cafeteria, teach lining behavior, assist them onto the bus, and so on. In contrast, Kalekin-Fishman (1987) describes transitions as contexts for *partial* control, compared to the relatively uncontrolled environment of the playground and the heavily controlled environment of the classroom. Many hallway rules at Pellegrini elementary reflect classroom norms of conformity to a time schedule, not wasting time, and maintenance of order (LeCompte, 1978, p. 25).

#### **Line Rules**

Although I think these general rules of the hallway applied, though were not enforced, in all circumstances, there was also a set of rules added to them specific to the line social formation. These probably varied somewhat from teacher to teacher--

***General Hall Rules:***

no running 11  
no fighting 8  
no talking 5  
no chewing gum 4  
no yelling 4  
no cussing 3  
no playing 3  
no noise 3  
no put downs 2  
no horseplay 2  
no writing on  
halls/metal strip 2  
no spitting 2  
no throwing objects  
(popcorn, pencils) 2  
no talking back to the  
teacher (third)  
no using drugs (third)  
no smoking (third)  
walk (third)  
behave (third)  
no hitting (third)  
no being destructive  
(third)  
no lying (third)  
no beating the wall  
(third)  
no climbing the wall  
(third)  
no puking (third)  
no shooting paper  
towels (third)  
no talking while class  
is in session (fourth)  
no writing on artwork  
(fourth)  
no tearing down  
artwork (fourth)  
no slamming doors in  
restroom (fourth)  
no making faces at the  
teacher (fourth)  
no shooting birds  
(making an obscene  
gesture) (fourth)  
read while waiting for  
classes to begin in morning  
(fourth)  
no eating (fourth)  
wipe your feet

Figure 8. Rules for the Hallway and Lines, According to Children

(fourth)  
no bringing guns  
(fourth)  
no hanging on the door  
(fourth)  
no drinking (fifth)  
no jumping and  
touching doorway (fifth)  
no putting hand on  
metal strip (fifth)  
no messing up people's  
hair (fifth)  
no kicking (fifth)

***Line Rules:***

no pushing/shoving 7 (59%)  
straight line 6 (50%)  
don't talk/lips closed  
6 (50%)  
hands by side 4 (33%)  
stay in line 3 (25%)  
face front 2 (17%)  
no passing 2 (17%)  
single file/don't walk  
side by side 2 (17%)  
quiet (fourth grade)  
can hardly talk  
(fourth grade)  
keep up (fourth grade)  
no playing in line  
(fourth grade)  
don't pull hair (fifth  
grade)  
don't step on feet  
(fifth grade)  
no aggravation (fifth  
grade)  
no running up on next  
person (fifth grade)  
be in designated line  
order (fifth grade)

Figure 8. Rules for the Hallway and Lines, According to Children

as I assume the generalized rules did, judging from the esoteric rules that varied by grades noted above. Line rules prescribe the elements of order and decorum for whole-class hallway movements.

The right column of Figure Eight summarizes the rules distinctive to lines, as described by children. Also included is the number of groups, out of 12, that mentioned each rule, and grade level of those mentioned only once.

The generally lower percentages than general hallway rules suggests less salience of these rules, perhaps because teachers talk about them less. Perhaps more significant is the differing distributions by grade level. For example, the most frequently described rule, no pushing or shoving, was not mentioned by any of the third-grade groups but was listed by most of the fourth-grade groups and all of the fifth-grade groups. "Hands by side" was not mentioned by any of the fifth graders and by only one fourth-grade group, although three of the four third-grade groups emphasized this rule. Facing the front of the line was offered by two of the four third-grade groups, but by none of the fourth or fifth graders, while the "no passing" rule was only mentioned by fifth graders. These differences, of course, could simply be chance differences in memory by children. However, considering the large number of esoteric line rules, the majority of line rules being listed by only one grade

level, perhaps different rules are emphasized at different grades as refinements of preexisting skills or because of the distinctive emphases of teachers at each grade level.

Teachers often attempt to maintain the socially prescribed posture for the line (Carere, 1987; Goetz, 1975, p. 102): bodies positioned toward the goal, a straight and orderly line, and a single line. The teachers, in these studies, used "positioning language" such as "Keep your hands to yourself" and "You are pushing, go to the end of the line." Children are thus "funneled" to locations, directed and controlled in the hallways by statements such as "Keep moving," "Where are you going?" and "You are not allowed to take drinks now." Not obeying line rules resulted in being required to wait or be in the last group to be dismissed to the classroom (Goetz, 1975, p. 102). Teachers may not allow a line to move until children stop talking and the line is straight (Jackson, 1990, p. 14). Children are sometimes scolded for pushing in line and coming late to the classroom (p. 22), in fact scolding is more likely to result from these kinds of rule violations than from academic performance below what could be expected (p. 35). Talking in line was common in the lunchroom lines studied by Goetz, although talking was almost never tolerated in the middle school lunch lines described by Herrera (1988).

Paley (1984, pp. 61-69) believes that rules requiring children to walk slowly and avoid touching while in line are discriminatory against boys because of their higher activity level. She describes boys bumping into one another and pushing in line, as well as punching, wrestling, and grabbing more often as they walk down the hallway, some of which might be considered rough-and-tumble play, to be discussed shortly. Transitions are "those in-between times when controls are least dependable," she notes (p. 83).

Baker (1985, p. 417) describes rules that relate to the rate at which a line of children moved as they left a building for recess. She did not, however, specify this rate quantitatively, but simply concluded that the children knew and followed the rule; apparently she refers to rules not to run or dawdle. The genesis of line rules can be traced to the earliest days in elementary school (Cox, 1980, pp. 40-58; Thorne, 1993, pp. 30-31).

Line rules are variably enforced in the hallways. Bossert (1979, p. 38) describes a normally quite rigid fourth grade teacher who did *not* require her class to stay in lines in the hallway as they moved to a special class in another section of the building, although she did require them to line up and be silent *before* leaving the room. Bossert also notes that a more flexible fourth grade teacher allowed his children to scatter freely throughout the hallway when in transition (p. 40). Best (1983) found that going through hallways in lines was less common as children moved up the grade levels. By third grade children more commonly walked down the hallway in groups and consequently there was less control by the teacher on student behavior.

### Reasons for Rules

I then asked the children to talk about the purposes or reasons for these rules. Children often responded to this question by stating why they should *obey* the rules, not why the rule was required. Typical responses of this nature was the comment, "We'll get in trouble and they will tell our parents."

Some children did explore possible reasons for rules. Noise in the hall might disturb other people, several groups suggested. Gum was prohibited "so it won't get stuck in the carpet and they have to get new carpet." "We can't drink fruit punch so it won't get in the carpet," this group of third-grade girls added. Running might endanger other people. People get hurt when things are thrown. Safety was a major theme across responses of both boys and girls.

The third-grade mixed-race mixed-gender group explored the issue more deeply. One of the tasks of children was "to learn to obey the rules. They're tryin' to teach you a lesson, not bein' mean. We need hall monitors or [someone] beside the doors."

Several groups made detailed comments on the chewing gum rule, both during this session and in the one following. Children understood that this rule was to protect the expensive carpet, but one commented that it would be better to have a less expensive carpet and be able to chew. Several fifth graders, during the second session, described their feelings about not being able to talk or chew gum in the hall:

[Student 1]: We have freedom of speech, but they keep you from talkin' . . .  
during break you can get a little talkin' sometimes in the hallway.

[Student 2]: One big thing you don't be chewin' gum in halls 'cause carpet.

[Student 1]: At least be able to chew gum . . .

[Student 2]: It's more a prison here.

This fifth-grade group of boys also reflected several of the themes expressed by many of the groups in the first session:

[DR]: Why do you think the school has these rules?

[Student]: Uh, to keep us out of trouble.

[Student]: Tryin' to.

[Later, DR]: Keep you out of trouble, keep you from being injured . . . Are there any other reasons?

[Student]: To learn us to be quiet and all that kind of stuff.

[DR]: Uh huh.

[Student]: I don't want to be one of those nuns or nothin', goin' around bein' quiet all the time . . .

### Rule Variation and Breaking the Rules

Prior to the interviews, I knew children do not always obey rules. I also suspected that rules could vary both in prescriptive content and by varying enforcement in the hallway. Thus I asked children what rules might be broken sometimes and under what circumstances. This often produced discussions of which rules were most disliked, conversations that I encouraged in the attempt to discover their general perspective of the hallway.

In the previous question on hallway rules, I noted that third graders equivocated on the talking rule; groups spoke of being silent and talking quietly in the hallway as both being acceptable to teachers. This distinction in general related to the social forms taken in the hallway; in the line formation silence was usually prescribed, although whispering or talking quietly was allowed during the break when several children at a time were released from class to use the restroom and drinking fountains.

When can rules be broken? This was interpreted differently by different groups. The groups of all-white girls usually responded with exceptions considered implicit in the rules. A third-grade group said that talking was allowed if the teacher approved, that people might get out of line to look at something, that running was permitted in an emergency, and that perhaps some rules might be suspended during a fight. A fourth-grade group also mentioned emergency situations as the time rules would be suspended. When they told me they never broke the rules, I queried "Never?" One girl responded, "Well, maybe talking in the hall," and also admitted that she might not stand in line correctly or keep up with the line. Fifth-grade girls did not emphasize the extreme situations but spoke of times when the teachers were a bit more lax: "Sometimes we can talk or run in the halls when we come back from P.E." or special days such as field day or when returning from the circus. "You can't always be perfect," said one, admitting to surreptitious chewing of gum.

Other groups tended to ignore exceptions and variations in rules and emphasize those times when rules were violated. As one third-grade boy commented, "All the rules can be broken. I do."

Were there certain times when rules could be broken? "No," he responded. A fifth-grade group of boys told me rules could be broken "If ya don't get caught, like runnin' or hangin' on doors, because ya can't hurt nobody." Another group of fifth-grade boys was more like the girls, however, emphasizing that they were allowed to talk during break time. A fifth-grade group of mixed-sex and mixed-race children described a situation where rules could be safely broken. "Not when we have a substitute 'cause she don't know what the rules are, so we just do what we want."

From the interviews two rules were thought most likely to be broken in the hall: talking and running. Children said these were the most disliked rules, along with rules against rough-and-tumble play, being forbidden to use snack and soft drink machines, and the injunction against chewing gum. A group of fifth-grade boys discussed ways the carpet might be protected while allowing children to chew gum. Similarly a group of fifth-grade girls commented that they should be able to talk in the hallway as long as they did not disturb other classes. The emphasis by several groups was that rules should relate to the individual child's level of responsibility, not arbitrarily applied to everyone in the same way.

Rough-and-tumble play, a social form often observed in the hallways of Pellegrini elementary, has been noted in other school hallways as well. Sometimes children tease or engage in horseplay in the hallway, what Oswald, Krappmann, Chowdhuri, and von Salisch (1987) designate as "fooling around." Such rough-and-tumble play involves two factors: playful provocation and rough-house, both of which are nonaggressive. Neither of these tend to lead to aggression with popular children although they are more likely to do so with socially rejected children, perhaps because the latter do not differentiate this play from aggression (Pellegrini, 1989a; 1989b; 1990). This kind of play is associated with problem solving of a social nature, suggesting that it may serve to teach social skills (Pellegrini, 1990). Rough-and-tumble play like mock wrestling and shadow boxing occurs primarily between boys at the first grade level (Goetz, 1981) and other grades as well (Pellegrini, 1990). The high amount of rough-and-tumble play among girls at Pellegrini elementary may be unusual.

I also asked children if grade level made any difference in the likelihood of rule violations. There was a unanimous response: the sixth graders broke more rules more often, although some more tentatively suggested other grades as well. I noticed much louder and more boisterous behavior, and lack of lining among sixth graders during earlier observations as well and wondered why this was the case. I thought of age hierarchy (Passuth, 1987) as a possible factor. I also noted that the three sixth-grade teachers were all distinctive from other teachers in the hallway: two were men and the third was an African American woman. Perhaps divergence in gender and race was somehow related to divergence from norm enforcement practiced by the other teachers. Another possibility was that the impending move of all sixth grades to the middle school might have had some effect.

To what did the children attribute this regular breaking of rules by sixth graders? A third-grade group of girls suggested that it was because their teachers did not like them, while a fourth-grade girls group said the sixth-grade teachers were "really nice" and are "like one of the kids." Third-grade boys suggested the greater freedom was because sixth graders are bigger than other kids, an idea echoed by a fifth-grade boy who also opined that sixth graders who had "failed," not been promoted, were especially unruly. Fourth-grade girls said the sixth graders were "hot shots. They boss people around, kick them; they get to do more; that's not fair." In contrast a member of a fifth-grade boys group suggested there was justice in the divergence: "But they get in trouble more than you do. You see them and they get paddling all the time." A fifth grade girl indicated justice was forthcoming, "Sixth graders get to run in the hall and get drinks. But they will go to middle school next year, and can't whisper, will get called or they'll get beat up." Then she realized that this fate would come to others less deserving. "Right now we're bigger. In middle school I'm afraid we will get beat up [too]."

### Teacher Presence and Absence

From my earlier observations in the hallway, I was sure children would affirm that teachers in the hallway would make a difference in rule observance. Although most of the groups agreed with me, again the all-white girls' groups emphasized that *they* would act no differently regardless of whether the teacher was present. The third-grade girls emphasized that the teachers made no difference because others would tell on them or the teacher might come out unexpectedly. The

fourth-grade girls emphasized teacher presence would make no difference because they wanted to obey the rules, and they also believed a hallway patrol was needed for other children; they offered me the job. The fifth-grade girls did not answer the question, but thought that one particularly strict teacher had become nicer because some children called her names.

In contrast the boys and mixed groups emphasized the difference teachers make in the hallway. "[You] can't even whisper" one third-grade boy said, to which a peer responded, "Be quiet, you're 'bout like a teacher" [laughing]. A fourth-grade boy said if the teacher was not in the hallway, "Probably have a party . . . talkin', fightin'" [DR: "You mean play fighting?"] "Most of the time, sometimes." This group emphasized that student monitors also constrained hallway behavior. A fifth-grade boys' group noted that certain teachers made a difference, naming three that were particularly strict. One third grader noted that if you could make the teacher laugh, punishment did not follow rule violations.

What differences existed when teachers were not in the hallway? Boys and members of mixed-sex and race groups said running, writing on the walls, cursing, and hitting people were more likely with the teacher out of the hallway. The all-white girls third-grade group interpreted the question as referring to what would happen in line if the teacher was not *watching*: a child might talk, not look straight ahead, and hands might not be by sides, because the teacher did not see them.

I later asked several groups why children might stay straight in line and obey all the rules when the teacher was absent. This phenomenon had puzzled me during observations; for some unexplained reason there were times when children were silent and followed all or most of the rules and the teacher was not in the hallway. This was quickly answered by one group: student monitors were carefully recording all misbehaviors and reporting them to the teacher. Peer monitors are considered in greater detail in the next section of this chapter.

Were there sex differences in teachers' responses to rule violations? I suspected that boys would accuse teachers of being more lenient with girls and girls accuse them of greater leniency with boys. I was surprised to find a uniform response across all the groups: teachers tolerated the misbehavior of girls to a greater extent. One of only two children who hesitated to affirm this response was the only boy in a fourth-grade group that included the three girls that many children said were the "toughest" kids in the room. At first he said, "I don't know," then after a girl whispered in his ear, he affirmed that "girls get away with too much." A group of fifth-grade girls affirmed that girls' indiscretions were more tolerated, but one thought that Ms. Peach was harder on both girls and boys and perhaps even harder on girls.

I asked the children why they thought teachers tolerated more rule violations from girls. A third-grade girl suggested that it was because "Girls usually aren't mean, don't get in fights, so they get by with more," a perspective echoed by a fifth-grade group of girls and also affirmed by several teachers at the conclusion of the study. Several fifth-grade boys put it this way:

[Student]: Teachers don't go for a person, say a person's been good all year, say you got some of the people in our class, like girls?

[DR]: Uh huh.

[Student]: Been good all year, and then they start talkin' out in the halls, they'll even fight some, and the teacher won't get their names. 'Cause they been good all year.

[DR]: I see, so if they're good all year, then the teacher just kind of leaves . . .

[Student]: They don't ever get in trouble.

[Student]: She don't believe that they done it.

[DR]: Is that true more with boys or girls, you think?

[Several]: Girls.

[Student]: 'Cause they been cool. Behavin'.

A fifth-grade boy believed boys got in trouble more because teachers expected it. The mixed sex and race third-grade group suggested that it was because the "teacher isn't a boy, so she don't know how to handle them." A fourth-grade girl, in an all-girls group, merely said, "Because they're teacher's pets."

### Summation

Rule violations were commonplace at Pellegrini elementary. "Fooling around," as understood by children at other schools, includes talking, throwing things, bugging people, running,

or fighting and is believed to be normal exuberance by children, although teachers view it as symptomatic of an underlying problem (Lancy, 1993, pp. 62, 64). Staub (1987) indicates that misbehavior is especially likely to occur in hallways of middle schools, and he confirms Goetz's (1975, p. 176) opinion that this is because of little supervision (p. 38). The most common problems he found were high levels of noise, verbal aggression often including foul language, and playful nonverbal activities such as punching, pushing, and sparring or rough-and-tumble play that escalates with time (pp. 43, 49). The crowding of youngsters in the hallway was thought to increase the problem (p. 44). These factors may have contributed to rule violations at Pellegrini elementary, as well as the lack of recess periods for fourth to sixth grades.

Why are the rules mentioned by children at Pellegrini Elementary important? These are prescriptive norms reflecting school culture as understood by children. In addition these rules indicate the normative values children have heard and remember, whether or not they always follow them. Educators should consider the values reflected in the rules children internalize: do the rules reveal what is most important for the child's immediate and long-term benefit, or are they more for the teachers' convenience? Do they reflect an aspect of the hidden curriculum that may be more significant than what children hear verbalized in their classroom lessons?

### **Teacher Control and Monitoring in the Hallway**

As a result of my observations, I became interested in how teachers monitored what occurred in the hallway, as well how they enforced rules and controlled the behavior of children. I thought that perhaps children could provide further insights into these issues, so I asked about control and monitoring during the interviews.

#### **Monitoring**

Teachers monitored by watching and listening in the hallway, children told me. Ms. Glynn had "eagle eyes," said one third grader, vividly portraying the vigilant search for misbehavior. But teachers also had indirect ways of keeping in touch with activities of youngsters outside the classroom. One way was through physical cues from children; they knew you were running in the hallway if you came into the classroom "huffing and puffing," a boy told me. In addition, teachers could tell you were lying about hallway indiscretions by the look on your face, one youngster said.

Teachers also discovered what children did in the hallway through peer monitors or "name takers." Children remarked that peer monitors sometimes were unfair, ignoring misbehavior in their friends and sometimes attributing violations to recipients rather than instigators of conflicts. Obviously, remarked one fourth grader, monitors do not take down their own names for misbehavior. They could be overly strict as well, as noted in a fifth-grade boys group:

[First student]: You can laugh at somebody and you can't help it. Some of those monitors, if you even hardly even laugh, they'll get your name.

[Second student]: He'll get your name right there.

[First student]: And they'll snicker a little bit.

Sometimes children tell on others when they are not specifically designated as monitors. I find it interesting that tattling is often discouraged by teachers, and yet several of the teachers in my study use monitoring, a formally sanctioned variety of tattling. The children told me that teachers sometimes pay attention to tattling and at other times ignore it.

[DR]: How about in the hallway? How would they tell what you were doing?

[Student]: Tattling. You're not supposed to tattle. Sometimes she'll give a conduct cut.

[Student]: She picks on people.

[Student]: But on certain people she'll just let them tattle and give the other person a conduct cut.

[Student]: She says no tattling. But see if a girl tattles, she won't do nothin' to them, but if we tattle on a girl, she'd give our name; she probably wouldn't even give theirs.

Other ways of teacher monitoring mentioned by students included following children around, standing outside the restroom, hiding in another classroom and watching kids through the windows into the hall, and listening on the intercom-- the latter is more likely a means of monitoring in-class activity, not hallway activity. One group of fourth-grade girls recommended that cameras

be installed to help teachers monitor the hallway, such as those used in convenience stores.

### **Control**

Children often mentioned paddlings in the hallway as a major way of teachers' controlling behavior. Under Georgia state law, paddlings are allowed in public schools under certain conditions: another teacher or administrator must be present as a witness. I saw several paddlings and was amazed that the camera did not seem to discourage this form of corporal punishment.

Although children most often mentioned paddling as a means of control, many other disciplinary methods were also described for hallway rule violations (see Figure Nine). One child reported that a teacher also used ridicule:

[Student]: Start doin' somethin', and she says "You stop," get you spanked. Start doin' it again, she think, says "My dog acts better than you do."

[DR]: Her dog is better, her dog is what?

[Student]: Acts better. She talks a lot about her dog.

[Second student]: She called Bill a jackass.

### **Summation**

A variety of disciplinary approaches were used to control hallway behavior at Pellegrini elementary. I felt uncomfortable with some of the procedures I saw used in the hallway, as well as with what the children told me. Perhaps some of the youngsters exaggerated. It may be easier to remember a few injustices than many times of justice. Yet teachers are human and, when tired or overwhelmed, can say and do things they later regret. I hope teacher regret is conveyed to the children. Monitoring and discipline are attempts to keep the hallway from becoming chaotic. Yet many children saw this high degree of control as excessive, and I agree. The amount and degree of discipline required suggests that current practices were not working well. What is learned when education is associated with pain or ridicule? The teachers I heard criticized the most in my groups were those who regularly used corporal punishment and sometimes stooped to ridicule. In contrast, those who eschewed these approaches did not receive the disrespect given the harsh disciplinarians. I continue to wonder if there is less need for discipline in the classroom and hallway if children change activities and locations, consistent with novelty theory, such as by means of one or more recesses during the day, and participating in unstructured social interaction in the hallway.

paddling  
 standing in the hall  
 writing sentences/writing pages from dictionary  
 sitting or standing against the wall with nose in  
 the corner  
 teacher walking with child to the bus  
 losing recess  
 name on the board  
 sitting by the teacher  
 going to the "opportunity room" (O.R.) or  
 "in-school suspension" (I.S.S.)  
 (a room near the principal's office where children were required to work  
 in isolation and with continual monitoring by a videocamera)  
 parents being called  
 home visit by teacher  
 parents coming in for a conference  
 suspension from school  
 teacher telling to be quiet, becoming angry, yelling, or threatening  
 special school/"alternative" school  
 teacher taking the child to the principal's office  
 required to walk down the hall or in circles  
 numerous times  
 conduct cuts (after four a parent is called)  
 ridicule

Figure 9. Disciplinary Methods Described by Children

using the restroom  
 taking messages to teachers or principal  
 lining up  
 using the drinking fountain  
 conveying a verbal message to another teacher  
 going home or to the bus  
 going to the principal's office  
 going to lunch  
 going to the library or other classes  
 waiting for classes  
 going to activity/outside  
 paddling  
 vomiting  
 studying

Figure 10. Reasons Considered Legitimate for Being in the Hall

### Reasons to Be in the Hall

From my observations, as well as from the literature and my memories of childhood, I realized there were many reasons children entered the hallway. The schedule of the day required children to move into the hall to go from class to class. Physical necessity required an occasional trip to the restroom or drinking fountain. But were there other reasons as well? I suspected from the beginning that children might tell teachers they had physical needs when actually there were other reasons for the exit.

Children generated a number of reasons to be in the hallway that teachers would consider legitimate (see Figure Ten). Most of these I observed earlier in the research.

There were other reasons for going to the hallway that teachers were less likely to perceive as legitimate. A third-grade boy suggested that you could give a teacher a legitimate reason to accomplish less legitimate goals: "To go to the hall, tell 'em you need to use the bathroom or somethin'; and you'll be playin' so you don't learn." This was echoed by a fourth grader. A fifth grader similarly spoke of asking to go to the library to get a book, when the goal was to be with friends. This was time coordinated with children in other fifth-grade classes so they could "hang out" in the restroom for twenty minutes or so. A member of a third-grade group told me that "When we're thirsty, we tell the teacher we need to go to the bathroom so you can get a drink. I do that." Leaving the classroom in this manner could also be a means of tension release. The third-grade boy continued, "When I get mad at Ms. Glynn, I go to the bathroom and punch the wall. Go to the hallway to fight or play or talk to friends. And jump on the thing at the doorjamb. Put things in trash can, like slam dunk [basketball]." A fifth-grade boy indicated that he sometimes left class because of boredom. A third grader did not offer any reason for *ever* being in the hallway except "Get out of the classroom, get water, talk to friends, fake I'm sick or thirsty so I can get out of the classroom." After a moment this youngster added, "Go to lunch."

Purposes children offered for entering the hallway not likely to be sanctioned by the teacher included talking with friends, picking fights, "hanging out," playing around, eating food, passing notes to one another, running down the hall, running away, and getting in trouble. Probably these occurred as well under the pretense of more legitimate reasons. In the literature, other reasons for children being in the hallway include hallway parades (Paley, 1984) and fire drills (Schwartz, 1975, p. 105; McLaren, 1980, pp. 171-172).

Carere (1987) notes that requests for using the restroom and drinking fountain and acting sick are the only ways children can completely disengage from the classroom at their own initiative. Trips to the restroom are an escape from classroom stresses and control of the teacher (Best, 1983). A child sometimes exerts control through exaggerated postures of the body, such as clutching the groin (McLaren, 1980, p. 68) as well as saying, "It's an emergency" (Carere, 1987). Carere maintains that children are aware of the importance of this body language accompanying the request, regardless of whether the purpose of going was more social, whether joining friends in the restroom or genuine physical distress. The priority of the social function was implied by children in Carere's study who had claimed urgency earlier and who subsequently were observed slowly ambling down the hallway, often stopping to look at posters on the walls along the way. I am sure this occurred at Pellegrini elementary as well. Carere notes that children are more likely to make restroom requests than ask for a drink or act sick because they can emphasize the immediate necessity of this activity, because of the dire consequences if they are not allowed to leave the room, and because of the impossibility of the teacher disconfirming the truthfulness of the claim. Best describes planning, conversations, and games played in the restroom, such as how high a boy could urinate on the wall (also see Spradley & McCurdy, 1972, p. 28, for girls' games in the restroom). The restroom is a favorite place for social interaction, even as early as the preschool years (Kalekin-Fishman, 1987).

The hallway can become a playground for children. Often children seek new routes to rooms, as school hallways are seen as a maze to be explored rather than a functional means of arriving at a destination (Goetz, 1975, pp. 110-111). Some of the children play hide-and-seek or tag in the hallways while returning from another area of the school to their classrooms, Goetz notes. However, when the entire class is outside the classroom, a teacher is usually present because it is assumed children would behave unacceptably otherwise (p. 176). Perhaps this is the reason some schools do not allow movement to and from the classroom without a permission slip (Boocock, 1980, p. 128, citing Holt).

### **Conclusion**

Children see the hallway quite differently from most adults. In Chapter Six I began to look for the general patterns of movement, perhaps because of the influence of Hall's theory on my thinking and observation. The children, in contrast, were far more concerned with activities that were against the rules, especially those that were fun, dangerous, or cruel. While very aware of the rules, some children developed ingenious ways to participate in peer culture either under the guise of legitimacy or otherwise stealthfully avoiding teacher observation and censure. Other children, especially white girls, expressed fear and concern about many of these violations of prescriptive norms, while their own occasional violations of those norms were thought to be ignored more often by the teachers. Perhaps those less subject to censure for violating norms more easily affirm school culture norms.

## CHAPTER VIII

### LINE UPON LINE

One of the most commonly observed social formations in the hallway is the line. This is the most recognized social formation in school hallways, mentioned in a number of studies, although it is usually given only brief comment. Few studies consider school lines in detail, and these concentrate on lines specific to the school cafeteria, not the hallway.

In everyday adult life, the term "line" can be used interchangeably with "queue," a sequential prioritizing of people, either physically in a visible line, or symbolically as in a waiting list. The physical variety of queue is a social system (Milgram, Liberty, Toledo, & Wackenhu, 1986) and in extreme cases can even become a culture (Mann, 1985). The queue as waiting time for service has been studied extensively by researchers in economics and business (e.g., Gross & Harris, 1985; Hall, 1991), although Schwartz (1975, p. 4) comments that such precise description comes at the expense of understanding the social organization involved. Adult queues of this nature usually form because the number of people desiring a service exceeds delivery capabilities (Schaffer, 1972, p. 4). The queue depersonalizes participants to rank order position (Schwartz, 1975, p. 171; Schaffer, 1972, p. 21). The presence of a queue implies that time is highly valued (Mann, 1985) and that those waiting in line defer to the power of the server (Schwartz, 1975, p. 5). Schwartz also notes the ritual insult that occurs when standing in a queue--individuals face the back and buttocks of the person in front of them (pp. 177-178).



#### **The Development of Lining Behavior**

In the last chapter, lining rules were examined, many of which accentuate how this social formation is maintained. How are line rules and norms learned and sustained early in life? Schwartz (1975, p. 94, 173) suggests that the basic idea behind queues is the subordinating of personal desires, which begins in infancy via the wait between expressing desire by crying and receiving food or other service from the parent. Deferring immediate gratification begins in the context of server (parent) and queuer (baby). Later in life children are required by parents and teachers to take turns in games and other activities, another predecessor to queuing (p. 94).

Children learn a script for queue participation--a mental understanding of social situations that recur regularly (Czwartosz, 1988). Queueing involves taking various roles in a drama, a drama where the person is an extra while at the end of the line, taking successively more prominent roles as the line moves forward, and becoming the main character at the front of the line. Service is the climax of the drama, followed only by departure, the final resolution of the script. This script is a general schema filled with specific content--a particular queue position and its context. Thus the desire to make a purchase activates the shopping schema, which involves using the queue script at the check-out line.

The queue script begins to be learned almost from birth. Babies are often carried in lengthy Polish lines, says Czwartosz, and as a result the adult is permitted to queue in a special priority line. This regular social experience of the infant is associated with rejection both through not being the center of attention--the baby is secondary, a means to the end of gaining access to the priority line--and more explicitly through negative reactions of the mother and other queueurs to the baby's cry (Czwartosz, 1988).

At about three years of age, Polish children enter preschools in which youngsters are taught to line up to hang up coats, use the restroom, wash their hands, obtain favorite toys, interact with the teacher, and participate in other activities. Czwartosz (1988) estimates that the typical preschooler spends up to one and a half hours a day in these preschool queues, even more time than they spend playing. The child learns that others, including teachers, evaluate their queue behavior. Penalties for violating queue rules include going to the end of the line or not being allowed to queue for the item or privilege. In the process the child learns queue position, not urgency of need, is basic to life in general. As Czwartosz says, "A child at nursery school does not queue up for the toilet because he or she wants to pee, but rather, pees because of having queued up to do so." Other activities become secondary to the queue script: riding a rocking horse, for example, is merely the epilogue to the drama of standing in line for the horse.

In the United States, Cox (1980, pp. 37-39) describes the first day of kindergarten as including the designation of a child to take the front position in line as children go to the restroom, recess, or other locations outside the classroom. During the morning of the initial day of school the teacher had children practice lining up at the door in anticipation of a trip to the restroom. As the children took their places in line, the teacher emphasized that they should be quiet and keep the line straight in the hallway. After finishing their restroom activity, the teacher again had them line up and return to class. Later in the day the kindergartners went to recess by lining up behind the designated line leader prior to leaving the room. When a child began pushing in line, the teacher moved the youngster to a position in front of her by holding his arm. This suggested that a line rule, not pushing, was either not understood or was being disobeyed, thus the importance of obeying the rule was conveyed to the child as well as onlooking children. At the end of the first recess, children responded to the teacher blowing a whistle by lining up and walking back to the classroom (pp. 40-41). On the second day of kindergarten, children arriving by bus were told by the teacher to line up outside the door when the bell rang (p. 43). By this point many of the components of lining had already become a routine aspect of the school day.

Thorne (1993, p. 30-31) describes a somewhat similar learning sequence from the first day of a kindergarten she studied. A boy was chosen as line leader, then the teacher told the children that they must be quiet when in the hall. She had the children chant the rule together. The teacher told the children that the group of children who were the quietest would be able to join the line first. After the in-class line was complete, the entire line moved to the hallway. When one child began talking loudly, she was sent to the end of the line. The teacher reminded children to stay in line and said, "This is what you call a line; one at a time."

Lining by children is sustained outside school later in middle childhood. For example, Mann and Taylor (1969) examined children's queues at a movie theater where the first 25 youngsters were to receive complementary Batman shirts. Consistent with Mann's (1985) studies

with adults, they found that children up to the twenty-fifth child tended to overestimate the number of queuers in front of them, while those after that position tended to underestimate their current position. The researchers concluded that this indicates that motivation affected the perception of line position.

Several researchers have also examined lines in middle schools. For example Willis and Reeves (1976) studied racial and gender segregation in cafeteria queues, while Hall (1991, p. 255) cites a study by Quinton and Stephenson on length of time in a cafeteria line. Herrera (1988) made a detailed ethnographic investigation of lines in a Boston middle school both in the cafeteria and hallways, emphasizing nonverbal behavior between teachers and students in those contexts. A detailed analysis of these studies of middle school lines, however, is beyond the scope of the current study.

### **The Physical Appearance and Variations of Lines**

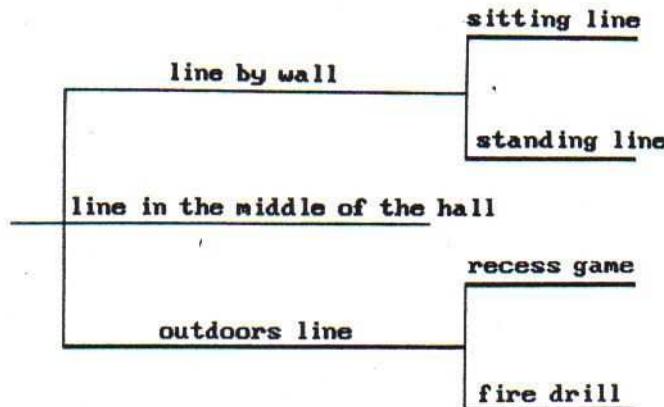
Lines are, in their prototypical form, single file arrangements of children. The appearance of the line has been described in several different ways in the literature. The corollary term queue is taken from the physical appearance of the line; it is French for "tail" (Hall, 1991, p. xiii). Thorne (1993, p. 39) comments that lines reminded her of caterpillars or airplanes preparing to take off. While I was making some comparative observations of children in the early elementary wing, the appearance of a teacher leading her class in a line reminded me of ducklings following the mother duck. The accentuated difference in size between the adult teacher and young children is reflected in this metaphor; the mother duckling idea did not seem to fit the older elementary children I studied.

The physical form of the line is reflected in my theoretical notes of March 22. Four varieties of lines were summarized at that point. The *straight* line fits the ideal type of the line social formation, one of the norms instilled and enforced by many teachers as a key line rule (cf. Johnson, 1985, p. 201). I found that the degree of encouragement of this norm varied by teacher and by day, though not very predictably. Many lines failed to meet that ideal, *uneven* lines were frequent. Lines of children from the early elementary wing were usually straighter and conformed to other line rules to a greater extent than most lines of older elementary children, and most of time sixth graders at Pellegrini Elementary did not have lines at all.

I also distinguished the standard line with the *sitting* line, although later observations indicated that this--though it often resulted from prolonged lines--was a variation of another social formation, the phalanx, because children turned ninety degrees when they sat down in the hall. A third variation of the line noted was the *standing-by-the-wall* line, which sometimes became a partial phalanx, again because children turned as they stood for prolonged periods of time. Although this standing- by-the-wall phalanx was never encouraged by teachers, it was sometimes permitted. A fourth variation was line *reversal* in which a line would move to a location, stop for a period of time, then all children would turn around and move to the opposite destination. This variation was purposefully implemented by teachers when students moved from one classroom to another in the same entryway; youngsters were not allowed to move directly to the room sharing the entryway because the students in the second room had not yet vacated.

In my theoretical note of March 22, I also described three unusual lines that had been observed by that date, and later I added three more unusual lines. In the early elementary wing I observed the "duck waddle" line involving a stylized movement pattern led by a teacher and accompanied by a rhyme spoken softly by the teacher and children. A second unusual variation of the line was when one child would turn to face the child immediately behind him or her to engage in conversation. Technically this second variation could be also be considered a moving cluster. The third unusual line noted was the outdoors line, which occurred during several early elementary observations. This line had no distinctive appearance, instead it was unusual because of the location outside the hallway. This occurred during a game led by a teacher. It also occurred as part of a fire

drill observed in the early elementary wing when children moved in lines to the playground but remained in separate lines, each classroom being a separate line, for perhaps five or ten minutes. After a bell rang, the children returned to the classrooms but never left the line formation. A fourth unusual variation departed from the general norm of lining next to a wall; instead a line formed that began near the middle of an entryway and extended out to the middle of the hallway. Still later in my observations I discovered a fifth variation. On several occasions early elementary children walking through the older elementary wing were required to fold their hands behind their backs. Finally I noted on a few occasions that two lines would intersect at 90 degree angles, one line moving down the length of the hall and a second going from one entryway to another directly across the hallway. These variations are summarized in a typological framework in Figure Eleven.



#### LOCATION IN POSITION TAXONOMY

*Other variations that are not taxonomic  
(they fail to meet the mutually exclusive criterion):*

Straight line  
Uneven line  
"Duck waddle" line  
Face-to-face line  
Folding hands line  
Intersecting lines

Figure 11. Taxonomy and Typology of School Lines

### Defining Lines and Purposes of Lines

Most of the lines in elementary schools are *not* queues that prioritize service; school lines generally prioritize arrival at some destination and often are used as a means of moving children from one place to another. This kind of line is relatively uncommon outside schools, although, as has been mentioned previously, it can be found in prisons, mental hospitals, and the military (Goetz, 1975, p. 248). Lines in school serve as a means of social control of children through increased surveillance and, often, conditional movement--for example, a line required to be straight and quiet before children are allowed to move to the destination. They are not spontaneously developed by children; they are imposed by teachers, although teachers may allow children to choose their specific positions in the imposed social formation. Overt social interaction is usually minimal in the school line (Jackson, 1990, p. 14). Lines may be one way that schools teach children to wait (Gearing & Epstein, 1982). Most of the lines at Pellegrini elementary were for the purpose of moving children in a controlled way or for controlled waiting prior to movement.

This kind of line is designated the *school lineup* to distinguish it from the queue. From the literature and my observations, a definition of this variety of line can be summarized: *A school lineup is a variety of line in that participants face the back of the next adjacent person, but this social formation is externally imposed by the teacher, is monitored and controlled by the teacher or a teacher proxy, has line rules that forbid social interaction, generally involves movement from one location to another as a whole unit, and is a distinctive expression of school culture.* The school lineup and queue can be subsumed by the more generic term line, referring to either the school lineup or queue. The term lineup is understood to be an abbreviated designation for school lineup.

Jackson (1990, p. 14) emphasizes that queuing for resources *does* occur in some school situations, specifically the restroom and drinking fountain. Johnson (1985, p. 168) describes children queuing for the pencil sharpener in school. Willis and Hofman (1973) note that children queue for lunch in the cafeteria. Jackson compares the role of the teachers in queuing to that of a supply sergeant in the armed forces, determining who gets what resources. Cafeteria lines at Pellegrini elementary did determine priority of service, but because children were arranged alphabetically, the "first come, first served" rule of queues was not as important; those first in line were served first, but children did not take a given place in line in order of arrival as in most adult queues.

Carere (1987) describes elementary school lineups that form to enter the school in the morning. She suggests that the lineup is required so that teachers can spot anything that might keep students from entering the school. The adult in charge used statements to keep the lineup orderly, such as reminders to not touch others. Children who pushed in the lineup were required to go to the end. The process of entering the school was termed "funneling," which includes movement to the specific classroom needed. In the hallways teachers again used directive language to keep children from dawdling or getting drinks of water. The lineup was required to be silent, which the teacher considered to be a way of obtaining control that would continue within the classroom setting.

If teacher control is a purpose of the school lineup, as seen in these illustrations, does variation in the amount of adult control of children's lineups influence subsequent activities in the classroom or at recess? In an experimental study (Ratcliff, 1993) I alternately used high and low levels of control as I led first-, third-, and fifth-grade children to and from the playground. In the high control condition I required children to be quiet, walk slowly, and stay in the lineup, while in the low control condition I allowed children to walk or run, talk, and depart from the strict lineup formation. Boys', though not girls', activity level on the playground increased ( $p < .05$ ) following the high control condition, although activity level was not significantly changed in the classroom. Smiling significantly increased on the playground subsequent to the high control condition ( $p < .05$ ), although the increase in smiling approached significance in the classroom with the low control condition ( $p = .059$  using a two tailed test of significance). Facial expressions of anger and fear did not significantly change in either the high or low control conditions in either the classroom or on the

playground. In sum, a highly controlled lineup on the way to the playground tends to increase activity level and smiling at that destination, while a low control lineup or even absence of a lineup on the way from the playground to the classroom tends to increase smiling in the classroom but does not significantly affect classroom activity level. The degree of control by adults does influence children's behavior, even beyond the immediate location in the hallway, but high control through strict lineups--particularly when the destination of the lineup is a classroom--can be inconsequential behaviorally and even counterproductive affectively.

There are other possible purposes for lining, although these often interrelate with the issue of teacher control. Thorne (1993, p. 39) suggests that delay and congestion can be alleviated through the single file aspect of the lineup. In contrast, Johnson (1985, pp. 80, 84, 165, 173) links the values of linearity, regimentation, and order with lining. Johnson also notes that children walk on the right side of the hallway; perhaps he is implying children are being socialized for driving automobiles.

Lining up in the school hallway can occur for unusual purposes. Paley (1984, pp. 32, 61) describes a holiday parade of kindergartners who were reminded to avoid touching one another and to proceed slowly down the hallway. Schwartz (1975, p. 105) describes school fire drills, which usually involve lineups. These drills attempt to help children avoid the disastrous effects of panic in the case of an actual fire. Fire drill rituals serve a socializing function in teaching children an orderly means of exit from public contexts by means of lineups.

### Children's Perspectives

I attempted to discover children's ideas about the purposes of lines in interviews (I did not distinguish lineups and queues to them, thus I will use the more generic term "line" throughout this section) by having youngsters view videotapes of themselves and others in lines, then asking them what was happening and why. Many of the comments made reflected their thoughts about the purposes of specific actions that occurred in line, rather than the line formation itself. However, some responses both to this question and others later in the session did imply perceived purposes of lining.

The emphasis on order and control is implicit in the comments of several fourth-grade girls:

[Sue]: It's really good to be in a straight line in case there's another class goin' up and down the halls 'cause that means, see really hard, see sometimes our class, we're, Miss Powell always makes sure we're in line and we stay in line. But sometimes we get separated from our other class, 'cause all the other fifth and sixth, all the other kids, are just stretched out all along goin' up and down the halls ...

[Mary]: And another reason you, um, should stay in a straight line, sometimes we have pretend fire drills. Everybody's running awful wild, like horses or somethin'.

[Sue]: Stampede! [giggles]

[DR]: You should be in line for fire drills.

[Mary]: Yes.

[Sue]: Especially.

In the context of the interview about lines, several fifth-grade girls made comments that also reflect the emphasis on control. [Barbara]: You're like criminals to all the teachers...

[Jodi]: School's like a jailhouse cause you can't go nowhere.

A fifth-grade girl in another group created a vivid metaphor to describe this high level of control: "In line [I feel like] I'm in a cage and can't get out."

Several children commented that they were required to be in line because of their own immaturity. A fourth grader mentioned that the line, however, made him feel like a baby, placing

him in an immature role and thus perhaps encouraging immature behavior. Being treated like babies implies condescension that can be degrading. As one third-grade boy commented in the context of talking about lines: "Us kids are barely human."

One fourth-grade girl noted, however, that lines also had a positive side. "Kids pick on you if you're not in line," she commented. Several children noted that lines tend to be quieter than other social formations or there is less trouble when kids are in lines, especially when teachers are around.

### **My Observations and Summation**

Consistent with analytic induction, I tried to find some purpose for lineups other than control of children. I did this by looking for any example of a spontaneously formed lineup, outside teacher authority--personal or symbolic via peer monitors. The only example I could find were brief lines at drinking fountains, but these were queues, not teacher-directed lineups intended for class movements. Once, however, I observed three fourth-grade girls playing line but this was clearly pretense and included a lot of verbal interaction and touching not associated with lineups. The other lineups that existed apart from teacher authority were, on closer examination, actually groups of phalanxes and clusters, which only roughly approximated the physical shape of a line.

Perhaps the children's ideas on the purposes of lines are reflected by what they did not say as much as by what they did say. In spite of several probes about purposes, many children seemed to have no idea at all why lines existed. This social form may have little meaning for children because they see no purpose for lining up other than the convenience for and control by the teacher.

### **Line Place**

Line position can be decided in various ways. Goetz (1975, p. 160) notes that on one occasion students lined up by the order of month in which their birthdays took place. At other times children were called into a lunch line by color of clothing worn, an innovation met with considerable enthusiasm (p. 207). In other contexts children simply compete by running or pushing into the school line. Early in the year second- grade boys tried to be first in the line to go into the building, but later in the year avoided this practice so they could stay out as long as possible (Best, 1983, p. 20). Line place is often determined by strength and size of the student, Best notes (pp. 75-76). Thorne (1993, p. 40-41) found that line position was determined by calling children to enter the line in phases, as a reward for groups who were quiet.

Being the line leader, or at least near the front of the line, is considered by students to be a form of winning (Best, 1983, pp. 75-76). Strong competition for the front of the line took place between students. However, line leaders were sometimes chosen by the teacher, and line leadership was often rotated so all students eventually got a chance to lead. Being at the head of the line was thought by children to be analogous to the teacher's role because the leader determines how quickly the others get to the playground, library, lunch, or bathroom. In addition the first child in the line would be served first in the cafeteria and have a better choice of seats in the lunchroom. At recess the line leader got the first choice of the ball fields, while the first in the line to the restroom had a wider variety of facilities from which to choose. The first to the library got the best seats, usually the child-size rockers (Best, 1983, pp. 75-76). Thorne (1993, p. 41) also notes that the position of line leader is highly desired and that children shove and push to obtain a location near the front.

Best also describes children cutting in the line, even usurping the line leader's position, which often leads to a fight and the teacher moving both children to the end of the line. Sometimes children ask friends for permission to stand in front of them; in Best's study this usually resulted in the other children demanding the teacher punish the intruder. If the child "butted" into a line without the permission of a peer, even greater hostility resulted, such as kicking and punching by other children. Usually this did *not* result in the child moving to the end of the line, says Best (p. 76). Both girls and boys fight to keep the honor of being line leader, but winning was not as ultimate a value for girls as it was for boys (p. 99). Children protest attempts to cut in a line,

although cutting in the back portion of a line is less likely to meet with challenge from other line members (Thorne, 1993, p. 41). Children who leave the line to sharpen pencils may not be allowed to return to their previous line place (Johnson, 1985, p. 203). In contrast with the hostility children receive on cutting into their own lines, five-year-old children cutting into adult queues meet with positive, encouraging responses, eight-year-olds with little or no reaction, and ten-year-olds with avoidance responses by adults (Dean, Willis, & La Rocco, 1976). However, considerable hostility can be expressed when adults cut into adult lines, particularly by those immediately behind the entry point (Milgram, Liberty, Toledo, & Wackenhet, 1986).

Thorne (1993, p. 41) comments that the area near the end of the line is generally devalued by children and youngsters may be given that position as a punishment. However, she also emphasizes that some children desire the end of the line either to avoid the contesting of position that takes place at the front of the line or to avoid surveillance by teachers. She comments that friends may group near the end of the line so they can converse with one another and avoid the vigilance required to hold a particular place in a line. Children also may voluntarily move to the back of the line to avoid being near someone of the opposite sex.

### **Adjacent Positions in Line**

Children begin to segregate themselves early in the early elementary years (Willis & Hofman, 1975). By sixth grade racial segregation in cafeteria lines is nearly universal, they comment. Racial segregation in lines continues in middle school populations (Herrera, 1988, p. 177; Willis & Reeves, 1976). Johnson (1985, p. 200) notes that older elementary white children often stayed near the end of the line.

Sometimes children are purposefully separated into two different lines by sex (Thorne, 1993, p. 39; Beresin, 1993, p. 239). Thorne notes that this practice is rooted in the early years of public education when some schools had separate doorways to the school for girls and boys. When Thorne asked why separate lines were used, teachers commented that children initiated the custom (p. 40). I recall visiting an extremely rigid religious high school and college that also insisted on this kind of separation by sex, even to the point of requiring the use of different sidewalks and lunchrooms for males and females.

The only time children had a mixed-sex line in Thorne's study was when they went to the cafeteria for lunch; separate lines were designated for those who brought their lunches and those who had a "hot lunch" (p. 40). Children generally maintained sex distinct lines through teasing those who joined the line of the opposite sex, as well as gestures and other speech. Thorne describes the sex-distinct lines as "places of sanctuary" for children. In a second school she studied (p. 41), staff required all children to form gender integrated lines because of federal law requiring equal access to school functions regardless of sex. However, within these lines children still tended to separate in same-sex groups, especially when waiting time was protracted (p. 42).

Subsequent to my data collection, I examined the videotape record for patterns in adjacent positions in lines. Twelve lines were repeatedly examined in detail, often using slow motion for details. I looked at three lines at each grade level, third through sixth grades. Not all of the lines included every child in class, and one long sixth-grade line was considered two lines by somewhat arbitrary division; the line was actually formed by at least two and perhaps all three sixth-grade classrooms. A total of 278 children were in these lines, which varied in length from 10 to 31 children each. They were taken from several different days and different times of day in a fairly random manner, but excluded lines going to the cafeteria because these used alphabetical order, not student choice, as the criteria for position.

I looked at two different aspects of adjacent positions in these lines: sex and race. I expected to find gender separation at all grade levels and thought that perhaps this would increase with grade level, because the Willis et al. studies, to be considered later in this chapter, found that spatial distance between children of the opposite sex in line increased with age in the elementary

years. I also suspected that children belonging to racial minorities would group together in adjacent positions. The first expectation was generally confirmed, while the second was not.

In the chart of sex adjacencies (Table One) I include two kinds of percentages to describe adjacent positions of children. The first, percentage of actual adjacencies, is the most obvious way of comparing girls and boys, showing how often boys and girls stand next to one another. However this statistic can be misleading because percentages generally imply a minimum of 0% and a maximum of 100%, both of which are faulty assumptions in the case of adjacencies. If both boys and girls are in a line as is the case with all twelve lines studied, there must be at least one opposite-sex adjacency, thus the minimum percentage of adjacencies must be greater than 0%, the precise minimum percentage is a function of the number of children in line. Likewise the maximum percentage of opposite-sex adjacencies possible is affected when there are an unequal number of girls and boys.

To illustrate these limitations on maximum and minimum percentages in adjacencies, consider some simplified examples. If five boys and five girls are in line, they have nine adjacencies. Of these nine, only eight have the possibility of same-sex adjacencies, because there are two sexes, there must be at least one opposite-sex adjacency. Thus the minimum possible percentage of same-sex adjacency is one of nine adjacencies or 11%, and the maximum is eight of nine adjacencies or 89%. Then consider a line of ten girls and five boys, which has 14 adjacencies and thirteen possible same-sex adjacencies. However, there are only ten possible opposite-sex adjacencies because no boys are left after the first five opposite-sex pairs. Thus a line of five boys and ten girls has a maximum percentage of opposite-sex adjacencies of 71%. Thus for each line I also include the maximum number of adjacencies in parentheses and calculated the percentage of *actual* adjacencies in relation to *possible* adjacencies in parenthesis.

The descriptive statistics in Table One indicate substantial gender segregation in lines and an apparent shift from the third grade to fourth grade toward greater gender separation in lines. This may moderate by sixth grade, although it is possible that this change downward is influenced by the infrequency of sixth-grade lines at Pellegrini elementary. Because their lines are so infrequent, sixth graders may not pay as much attention to line adjacencies as younger children, although sex separation is still strong. Another possible explanation is that with the onset of puberty flirtations begin occurring. Caution must be used in interpreting these numerical differences, not subjected to tests of statistical significance.

Data relating race and adjacent position in line were also collected on these twelve lines. Because the only racial minority with more than one member in line was African Americans, this was the only minority considered in my analysis. Clearly sex was more salient in adjacency than race; the only African American pairs in all twelve lines was one girl-by-girl adjacency and one boy-by-boy adjacency, even though 18 adjacencies were possible for African Americans.

I was surprised by the degree of racial integration found in these lines. I was also surprised in my observations at the general interracial harmony in the school. My undergraduate assistant also spontaneously commented on how race seemed to make little difference in the school and how African American and white children, particularly boys, often interacted positively, such as by placing arms on one another's shoulders as they walked together. This amazed me because of the

### ***Third Grade Lines***

Line one		
same sex = 13 (of possible 18)	68% (72%)	
opposite sex = 6 (of possible 19)	32% (32%)	
Line two		
same sex = 17 (of possible 23)	71% (74%)	
opposite sex = 7 (of possible 18)	29% (39%)	
Line three		
same sex = 17 (of possible 24)	68% (71%)	
opposite sex = 8 (of possible 18)	32% (44%)	
Composite		
total same sex = 47 (of possible 65)	69% (72%)	
total opposite sex = 21 (of possible 55)	31% (38%)	

### ***Fourth Grade Lines***

Line one		
same sex = 6 (of possible 8)	67% (75%)	
opposite sex = 3 (of possible 8)	33% (38%)	
Line two		
same sex = 12 (of possible 16)	71% (75%)	
opposite sex = 5 (of possible 17)	29% (29%)	
Line three		
same sex = 16 (of possible 17)	89% (94%)	
opposite sex = 2 (of possible 18)	11% (11%)	
Composite		
total same sex = 34 (of possible 41)	77% (83%)	
total opposite sex = 10 (of possible 43)	23% (23%)	

### ***Fifth Grade Lines***

Line one		
same sex = 21 (of possible 24)	81% (88%)	
opposite sex = 5 (of possible 26)	19% (19%)	
Line two		
same sex = 16 (of possible 17)	89% (94%)	
opposite sex = 2 (of possible 8)	11% (25%)	
Line three		
same sex = 6 (of possible 10)	55% (60%)	
opposite sex = 5 (of possible 11)	45% (45%)	
Composite		
total same sex = 43 (of possible 51)	78% (84%)	
total opposite sex = 12 (of possible 45)	22% (27%)	

***Sixth Grade Lines***

## Line one

same sex = 19 (of possible 25)	73% (76%)
opposite sex = 7 (of possible 24)	27% (29%)

## Line two

same sex = 17 (of possible 22)	74% (77%)
opposite sex = 6 (of possible 14)	26% (43%)

## Line three

same sex = 24 (of possible 29)	80% (83%)
opposite sex = 6 (of possible 30)	20% (20%)

## Composite

total same sex = 60 (of possible 76)	76% (79%)
total opposite sex = 19 (of possible 68)	24% (28%)

Table 1. Adjacencies in Line by Sex

comparatively recent integration of races with the completion of the school building when the districts merged. On the other hand, racial tension was present at the school; several children in all-white female interview groups expressed fear of African American peers, male and female. But I am impressed that race did not appear to be a major issue for most of these children.

### **Children's Perspectives on Line Position**

As expected, several groups of children in my study voiced a preference for being line leader, but a number indicated a lack of preference or a desire to be last. This also surprised me. Some who wanted to be first desired the dominance of the priority position, as expected, but others--exclusively white-girls groups--expressed a strong concern for the safety that went with increased teacher surveillance of that position. Likewise, the desire for being last in line sometimes reflected a desire to get away with misdeeds, as Thorne suggests, but at other times children wanted last place to avoid confrontations or embarrassment. I suspected that the destination might also make a difference--perhaps being first in line to go to physical education would be preferred over first in line to go to class--but that suspicion did not hold up in most of the responses children provided.

The reactions of an all-boys group of fourth graders reflected the preference of several groups of boys:

[DR]: Where would you want to be in line?  
 [All]: First!  
 [DR]: You want to be first in line all the time, going to class or going outside?  
 [Several]: Yeah!  
 [The following comments overlapped with one another.]  
 [Bill]: First to eat.  
 [John]: First to get there.  
 [Mark]: First all of the time.

But a third grade group of boys had mixed opinions:

[DR]: Where in line would you like to be?  
 [Buddy]: In front  
 [DR]: Why in front?  
 [Paul]: Last.

[Buddy]: So I can see everybody.  
 [Paul]: Nobody sees you back there.

This opinion was echoed by some third graders. Another group of third-grade boys initially stated a preference for the middle of the line, because more talking was possible. They then changed their minds and emphasized a preference for the back of the line. Why?

[Fred]: You can talk more.  
 [Dave]: And the teacher can't see ya. Kissin' your girlfriend at the back of the line, teacher won't see ya.

[Ray]: Play around. The teacher can't see, so you can talk or wrestle in the back of the line.

Several fourth graders also emphasized the value of not being seen by the teacher at the end of the line, although one child suggested that the line leader was also a good position because this person could set a faster pace for the line. A fifth- grade group of boys agreed that the back of the line would be desirable if the teacher would have all the girls move to the front of the line; they felt "crammed in" when around girls.

A group of fifth-grade girls preferred the back of the line to avoid embarrassment:

[DR]: Where in line would you most like to be?  
 [Jodi]: That's hard. The back.  
 [DR]: Why?

[Jodi]: 'Cause we don't know where to go or something, and if you're in front you go too far. Can follow the leader from the back. . . .

[DR]: Would you want to be in the front when you go outside to play, or in the back?

[Jodi]: In the back.

[DR]: Why?

[Jodi]: So they don't look at you. Or talk to you. You'll get in trouble.

[Dena]: So they don't call you names.

Several of the children who did not want to be near the back of the line were in a fourth-grade group of all girls who affirmed the value of lines:

[Betty]: But sometimes we get separated from our other class. . . . And we get, we're always late if we're near the end 'cause we get separated. . . .

[DR]: You think you could get separated?

[Betty]: That happens now, almost everyday.

[Mary]: Kids get all stretched out.

[DR]: So you think it's generally better to be in the line.

[Betty]: Much better.

Later when I probed this same group about the preferred position in line, this group of girls indicated the priority was being with friends, but other factors were also important.

[DR]: Where would you like to be in line?

[Betty]: With my friends.

[DR]: But, like, what part of the line? Front or back or . . . .

[Betty]: It really didn't [sic] matter.

[Sue]: I mean you're all gonna get to the same place. What's the big deal about bein' somewhere?

[Betty]: That's why all those boys always run up to the front like we saw in the video.

[Sue]: I don't get that though. One day I was the first one in line, and uh [names boys] and some more of 'em just run to get in front of ya. What's the great big deal?

[Mary]: We're all gonna get to the same place.

[DR]: Would it make a difference if you were like going outside or into a room?

[Betty]: Outside, everybody's runnin' to get out.

[Sue]: Outside is the big time.

[DR]: If you were going outside, where would you want to be in line?

[Betty]: Near the teacher so I wouldn't get in trouble.

[Sue]: I don't know, 'cause people push you down; when you tell them to stop, then you'll get in trouble.

[Mary]: For talking.

[Sue]: Yeah, 'cause you told them to stop.

[DR]: And if you were going into the classroom, is there anyplace you'd rather be in line?

[Mary]: Personally I'd like to be at the end because everybody else is up front, and they think they got to be first in line.

[Betty]: Yeah, and if you're in front, you'll get pushed over, you'll get hit, you'll get thump thump.

[Sue]: That's why I hate being the line leader because you always get run over, and they never do let you be the line leader.

[DR]: OK, I hear you saying two different things, and I wanna be sure I understand what you're saying. You're saying you don't like being line leader, but you say you don't get to be line leader.

[Sue]: No, no.

[DR]: Would you like, you don't wanna be . . . .

[Betty]: No, I don't really like that job.

[Sue]: It's really a privilege.

[Betty]: Cause ya get hurt.

[Sue]: They shove you down, you can skin your knees, carpet burn, all kinds of stuff.

The subject changed at that point. I am still puzzled over their comments on the value and problems of being line leader, as well as ambivalence about place in line, but safety, staying out of trouble, and the desire to be with friends are apparently stronger concerns than a particular place in line. Several other groups also emphasized the importance of friends being next to them in line.

The majority of the groups interviewed said that they did not want members of the opposite sex next to them in line: "We're allergic to boys," one girl commented. Some wanted separate lines for girls and boys. But not all the children wanted to avoid the opposite sex in line. One boy in an all-boys group suggested a favorite girl he would like to have with him in line; "He wants his girlfriend," a peer commented, without rebuttal. Several girls included a boy in their preferences for line partners, "because he's nice," one girl commented. In one group of third-grade boys, each chose a different girl they said would be their first choice to have next to them in line; this interesting group often attempted to turn our conversations into a discussion of girls and their alleged sexual prowess. One fourth-grade boy recommended that boys be alternated with girls in lines, "So we won't be talkin' and lose our recess time," although his peers disagreed with the idea of alternating girls and boys. Likewise a group of girls complained about how unfair it was that a teacher placed a girl between two boys who were "acting up."

### **Summation**

For the children in this study, and others cited in the research literature, sex has an important impact on line position. Perhaps the strongest emphasis throughout is the desire to avoid being next to the opposite sex in line, though not every child shares that concern. But another emphasis is the desire to be first in line. Yet some children prefer places near the end of the line either to keep the teacher from seeing forbidden behavior, most commonly boys, or to avoid confrontations over leadership and to talk with friends, most commonly girls.

### **Line Proxemics**

The space maintained between adjacent persons in line has been studied by some researchers. These studies emphasize differential spacing by race and sex.

Spacing between different-race children significantly increased with age in white and integrated schools, but not in African American schools, according to one study (Willis, Carlson, & Reeves, 1979). By sixth grade spacing between adjacent children of the same race was not significantly different from spacing between youngsters of different races. The researchers suggest this was because children were almost completely segregated in line and perhaps because children who choose to stand next to another race child in line may be atypical of children generally.

Gender also is an important influence of spacing of children in lunchroom lines. Although spacing significantly increased between girls as they got older, it did not increase between boys (Willis, Carlson, & Reeves, 1979). Same-sex children generally stand closer to one another in cafeteria lines, with male-to-female distance peaking at the highest grade level included in the study, sixth grade.

I attempted to replicate some of the spacing research of Willis et al. by repeatedly observing segments of videotaped lines. One line, observed from a ninety degree angle, allowed me to make a rough estimate of distance, a body width. This produced a fair degree of reliability ( $\kappa$  = .68 with John and me, .54 with Stephen and me). Unfortunately, every other line examined did not conform to the ninety-degree angle, making even a rough estimate untrustworthy.

We did not have the advantage of nine-inch square tiles on the floor, used by Willis to measure spatial distances of children.

#### **Activities in Line**

Many activities can occur in lines. When I asked the children in the interview groups about this, they provided a wide variety of responses. Indeed the diversity of behavior described was almost as great as the responses to the question about *all* the things that happen in the hallway from the first group session. I developed a very tentative organization of these activities found in Figure Twelve.

***Verbal activities:***

- Arguing
- Calling names
- Cussing
- Laughing
- Reading
- Singing
- Talking
- Yelling/screaming
- Writing notes to others

***Passive behavior/consequences***

- Becoming tired of walking
- Boredom
- Girls "messin' wit' ya" [a boy said this meant they were trying to start fights]
- Smelling bad breath
- Sweating

***Other activities specific to lining***

- Blowing on the next person's hair
- Breathing on people
- Having a "soul train" [??]
- Passing in line

***Other activities***

- Beating the walls
- Blowing snot
- Buddying
- Changing classes
- Chewing gum
- Eating
- Exercising
- Fighting
- Flipping people
- Fussing
- Ganging up
- Getting in trouble
- Going outside
- Goofing off
- Having fun
- Hitting people
- Horseplay
- Jumping
- Karate
- Kicking
- Messing up someone's hair
- Playing

Punching  
Rubbing objects against the  
wall  
Running  
Shooting birds [making an  
obscene gesture]  
Shoving  
Skipping  
Snowing [throwing papers]  
Spitting or "looging" [a  
mixture of snot and spit, I  
was told]  
Stepping on things  
Sticking out one's tongue  
Swinging objects around  
Tripping  
Walking

Figure 13. Activities in Lines According to Children

All Girls Group		All Boys Group		Mixed Sex and Race Group	
WHITE	BLEND	WHITE	BLEND		
<b>Third Grade</b>	get out of class talk fight act up call names fussing singing goof off get in trouble		fighting shooting birds cussing kicking blowing on hair	shoving fighting pushing horseplay karate noise	loudness talking running loogies beat wall hitting passing
<b>Fourth Grade</b>	group one: pick on you  group three: pushing shoving screaming running jumping hitting walls rubbing swinging things step on things fighting talking eating gum chewing			get beat up pushing step on feet passing	walking running talking playing fighting having fun arguing reading passing notes get in trouble
<b>Fifth Grade</b>	hitting talking running pushing shoving tripping kicking breathing on people blowing snot messing up hair looging	fighting pushing spitting pulling hair talking running jumping skipping	fighting looking at things boredom think about what will happen	fighting passing calling names sticking out tongues ganging up/ buddying writing notes	

Figure 13. Activities in Lines According to Children

In contrast to children's comments, in my earlier observations I found five line activities to be predominant. These included walking in lines, which, as noted earlier, is distinctive to children in schools and adults in institutional contexts; standing and waiting; talking; running, though not usually the entire line at once; and rough-and-tumble play. The distinctive kinds of lines mentioned earlier in this chapter are interesting departures from standard line behavior. In contrast with the diversity of behavior listed by children in my study, the extant literature on the subject of lines tends to emphasize touching and aggression in lines.

### **Touching**

Race is more predictive of touch behavior in lines than are general dominance patterns of youngsters, how well acquainted children are, or even degree of liking, although each of these has some influence on amount of touching as well (Willis & Hofman, 1975). Touch between children in white and integrated schools decreased as they got older, while children in African American schools did not significantly change in number of touches with age. Only one time in Willis and Hofman's study was a hand-to-hand touch observed between African American and white elementary children in line.

As with race, gender is also more predictive of touching between children than are patterns of dominance, degree of relationship, or amount of liking. Boys make fewer hand-to-hand touches than girls in cafeteria lines (Willis & Hofman, 1975).

Many of the activities the children in my study described happening in lines involved touch, although quite a few had a negative connotation--for example, shoving, punching, kicking. The most positive activities described by kids involving touch can, in most cases, be linked to rough-and-tumble play. Is it significant that the children I studied did not mention touches other than those involving genuine or pretend aggression?

### **Aggression**

Beresin (1993, p. 241-248) found that lining up after recess to re-enter the school was related to escalated hostilities among children. She emphasized that children were required to stand in line five minutes or more, consuming about one-fourth of the time spent outdoors. By using microanalysis of videotape, Beresin discovered that these hostilities were genuine aggression, not rough-and-tumble play often confused with aggression, and that the bell signaling the end of recess clearly precipitated both violent activity and hostile speech by children. She suggests the possibility of seasonality influence on aggression in these lines, as no incidents of line violence were observed during the month of May. Violence was observed in less than half of these postrecess lines, but the incidence of aggression was much higher during the lining time than at any other time of the school day, including recess. Beresin notes a ripple effect in line aggression, as an incident begins with one child pushing another, followed by retaliation often involving other nearby children. Beresin points to the closeness of children in line, the high level of excitement, and the sustained period of waiting in line as "setting the stage of violent interaction."

Why does hostility take place in lines? Beresin comments that it is more difficult for children to read one another's body cues in line and therefore it is more likely that rough-and-tumble play, what she terms "playfighting," is misinterpreted by other children to be genuine hostility. As noted previously, Pellegrini (1989a, 1989b) emphasizes that unpopular children are less likely to distinguish rough-and-tumble play from aggression and thus they are more likely to react to playfighting with aggression. Gender may also be related to aggression in lunchroom lines--jostling ceased when a girl rearranged one such line to avoid being next to a boy (Goetz, 1975, p. 152). As noted previously, aggression is also likely when one child attempts to cut in front of another; aggression may be as much circumstantial as it is idiosyncratic to specific children.

Extended waiting need not result in aggression, Thorne (1993, p. 42) notes. Instead the boredom can be alleviated through playing games or sitting down in clusters. Thorne suggests that talking and brief forms of rough-and-tumble play such as poking and shoving can also help pass the time waiting in line, activities also mentioned by Johnson (1985, p. 196).

Several children in my interviews commented on fighting in lines, although I did not observe anything more than very brief altercations in lines. One fourth-grade girl noted that "the main reason fights start is because of shoving." At the end of the session where we talked about lines, one third-grade boy said, "I wish I didn't have to go in the halls." I asked why, and he

responded, "Mostly because of the fights."

### **Summation**

Many activities occur in line, both those desired and not desired by teachers. Although children generally have a good understanding of prescribed norms for lining, as indicated in their descriptions of line rules in the previous chapter, nearly all of the activities listed in their descriptions of lines are forbidden by those rules.

### **The Meanings of Lines to Children**

What do lines mean to children? I have already noted that while some children prefer friends next to them in line, others emphasize the priority of teacher control and obeying line rules. Recall the child who suggested alternating boys and girls in line so they would not get in trouble. Also recall that many children prefer the end of the line, farthest from the teacher, because there is diminished control by the teacher. The strong measure of social control in the line clearly indicates the priority of school culture in this social form, as does the relative absence of moving line formations outside the school, except in prisons, mental institutions, and the military; what Goffman (1961) terms total institutions. The line, particularly the prototypical line that follows line rules, represents the presence of school culture perhaps more clearly than any other phenomenon in the hallway.

The presence or absence of a teacher influences the linkage between lines and school culture, of course. Lines are less frequent when the teacher is not in the hallway, and more deviations occur in lines with teacher absence. This assumes, of course, that the teacher requires lines and that she enforces line rules, and the teachers at Pellegrini Elementary clearly differed in this respect. Some teachers were very insistent in this respect, as one child commented, "Miss Peach? Strict to the bone." Another child in another group also targeted Ms. Peach, "She's always preachin' sermons about the old days [when we're in line]." Teacher mood also made a difference, for example:

If Mrs. Deegan got mad, they'd be straight in line. And people wouldn't a been makin' faces.

Time of day often influence teacher's strictness in enforcing line rules, as teachers became more lax in the afternoons. I also noticed one day when most of the teachers tolerated more deviance from line and other hallway rules, a day that began with a major fight in the girls restroom that both teachers and children discussed all day long.

A group of fourth-grade girls clearly contrasted the line formation with friendship groups:  
 [DR]: What do lines mean to you? Would you rather be in a line or be some other way?  
 [Emily]: That's hard to say because sometimes I want to be with my friends, and sometimes I think you should stay in a straight line  
 [DR]: When would you want to be in the straight line?  
 [Emily]: When you're mad at one of your friends.

Yet another member of this group associated the line with friends.

[DR]: Can you think of a time when you wouldn't want to be in line?  
 [Beth]: I can think of one. Sometimes when you're sad and you're lonely and everything, and nobody wants to be around you and everything.  
 [DR]: Who would you want next to you in line?  
 [Beth]: It can be a boy.  
 [Doreen]: I don't like any boy.  
 [Emily]: Friends.

Children are sometimes anxious while standing in line for fear of breaking the line rules and the difficulty in predicting enforcement of those rules. Consider the comments of these fourth-grade boys:

[DR] How do you feel when you're in line?  
 [Bill]: I feel like, uh oh, we're gonna get in trouble. I know it.

[Doug]: I just feel like bein' quiet.

[Bill]: Line rules.

[DR]: Line rules?

[Bill]: If they're different, we know we'll get in trouble, definitely. Sometimes we do, sometimes we don't.

A fifth-grade boy may have echoed that anxiety: When asked how he felt in line, he said, "I think about what will happen." Similarly, fourth graders remarked about the anxiety and anger they felt in line:

[Kimberly]: I get anxious to get there.

[Sandy]: I feel rotten.

[Tammy]: I get in trouble, I get mad.

This group also expressed alienation from the self while standing in line. I asked how lines were different when the teacher was not present, and one African American girl commented, "Ain't in line if teacher gone; be my own self." Some children strongly identify with the teacher, however. When asked about their feelings when boys "acted up" in line, several white fourth-grade girls commented,

[Emily]: I feel angry.

[Beth]: Mad!

[Emily]: 'Cause they're hogging all of Mrs. Powell's patience.

[Doreen]: I don't feel mad.

[DR]: You don't feel mad, you feel [pause]

[Doreen]: Frustrated, 'cause that takes up all our time. Especially in the halls they act up so much.

An African American boy in this same class similarly complained about the aggressive girls in his class.

[DR]: What are your feelings in line?

[David]: Mad [other boys echo him] 'cause girls always hittin' on ya, messin wit' ya.

[later]

[David]: Get beat up, girls messin' wit' ya. Push big time. Feet this long, make your shoe come off. Happens to me a lot ... Walkin' us up and step on your feet, pushin', tryin' to get in fights. Tryin' to pass in line.

Most children do not like lines. However a few look to the line as a means of safety and sanctuary with friends.

### Teachers' Perspectives of Lines

What do lines mean to teachers? Several of my observations in the hallway suggest some hints at an answer to this question, while teacher comments in the systematic interviews at the conclusion of the study provide details.

Lines are important to teachers, and many of the Pellegrini elementary teachers indicated this by the amount of time spent teaching, monitoring, and enforcing line norms. I thought of the military as I saw teachers "inspecting the troops," sometimes walking back and forth examining the line for deviations. I once noticed a teacher reacting to the violation of a line rule by condescendingly "reteaching" the rule. It was not unusual to observe teachers talking at length about line rules to children who failed to obey them. Children who walked too fast, or ran, were on occasion required to walk slowly from one end of the hall to the other sometimes dozens of times. One fifth-grade teacher I observed told her class that they really did not have a line unless it was absolutely straight. Obviously proper line behavior was extremely important to teachers, with the exception of the sixth-grade teachers who rarely required this social formation.

Line rules symbolize teacher power and control, and perform the function of preventing noise, destruction, and injury. Lines also teach children to conform to a sometimes arbitrary regulations, and that they must suppress personal desires and interests in the presence of a superior. Might these rules have a latent socializing influence for later occupations?

The amount of time teachers spent with line-related activities seems excessive. I am concerned with their using pedagogy, instruction, as a means of punishment, particularly when it seems to be done to embarrass or condescend. Is it important to have a perfectly straight line? I wonder if line decorum is that important. Did this occur at the expense of potentially better relationships with some children? I fear that may have been the case.

Although teachers consider lines to be important for children, they do not feel the same kind of lines are important for themselves. Teachers do not line up the way children do--they queue in waiting lines, to be sure, but lines for the purpose of controlled movement are not a part of customary adult life, for teachers or anyone else. Perhaps teachers do not consciously realize the difference between most school lines and queues because the external appearance is the same--just as initially I failed to see the *commonalities* of phalanxes and clusters because of their external *difference* in appearance.

When I interviewed the five teachers, I asked them what they thought children felt about lines and how *they* felt about children's lines. I also asked what meaning lines had for them.

Teachers said that children do not like lines and might not understand why teachers insist on them, although one teacher was sure children knew why they were necessary. Several even admitted that kids "hated" lines, while another commented that they just get tired of them. The most permissive of the five teachers interviewed commented that she does not insist on perfect lines, but emphasized the need for structure in the hallway.

Why have lines? One teacher noted the traffic problems in a crowded hallway without lines, including the danger of being run over; I interviewed a few children who echoed the same concern, particularly about the sixth graders who rarely used lines. One teacher said that a line is a means of being certain everyone is accounted for. Perhaps another way of saying this is that the line functions as an impersonal, institutional means of helping bureaucrats and their proxy, teachers, monitor and control the location and movement of large numbers of children simultaneously. Children can be overlooked, as the motion picture *Home Alone* vividly underscores.

What do lines mean to teachers? Several instructors emphasized the importance of control and organization in their advocacy of children's lines. "It would be anarchy without them," a fifth-grade teacher said, "Bullies shove aside others without them." One teacher spoke of the need to be considerate of other teachers, and lines help avoid the disturbance of others who may be in class. Another teacher commented that observing a line in the hall meant that the class was well behaved; I took this to mean that the controlled behavior of children reflected on the teacher. The virtue of self-control is implied in following line decorum; one teacher commented on her children's failure to incorporate this virtue, commenting, "The kindergarten looks better than us!"

As part of the member check, I asked the five teachers if they thought children sometimes avoided the front of the line to avoid being observed, but that perhaps they liked to be first to go outdoors. None of the teachers completely agreed with this tentative conclusion, but several reflected on aspects of these ideas.

One teacher said a lot of children want to be first, particularly for physical education and activity period. Another commented that three boys in her class always wanted to be first in line, regardless of the destination. A fifth-grade teacher said that some kids cannot bear to stand behind others (cf. the comment quoted from Schwartz, 1975, near the beginning of this chapter on the degradation involved in lining).

However, teachers recognized that some children prefer the back of the line. Several teacher suggested that some boys want to be last, and one offered that this was because these boys wish to engage in teasing and sex play. A teacher commented that children differ; some always want to be first and others always want to be last. Apparently no one wants to be in the middle.

I also asked the teachers if they believed girls and boys try to stay away from one another in lines. If this was the case, why?

All agreed with my assumption, but they seemed as puzzled by the phenomenon as I was. One third-grade teacher commented that children were interested in having boyfriends and girlfriends but denied their interest by emphasizing how gross the opposite sex was. A fourth-grade teacher noted that in earlier grades youngsters were able to be friends with members of the opposite sex, but by fourth grade this was not possible apart from a relationship that had romantic connotations. A fifth-grade teacher wrote off the polarization as immaturity. A third-grade teacher commented that girls are very close, holding hands and showing affection, while boys consider this

to be repulsive--perhaps because of homosexual connotations, a fifth- grade teacher suggested in another interview. This teacher suggested that children begin to be attracted to the opposite sex about midway through the third grade, but the affectionate touches of girls repulse the boys while the rough-and-tumble play and teasing of the boys repulse most girls.

### Conclusion

*Precept upon precept,  
Line upon line . . . (Isaiah 28:13)*

Rules and lines go together in school. Rules and lines both reflect school culture, even though rules may sometimes be violated in lines. Peer culture can be infused into school culture, as Carere (1987), Kalekin-Fishman (1987), and Reimer (1993) all note, and sometimes this can be advantageous to children's development and learning. Teachers insist on rules and lines, sometimes even when they are not necessary. The wise teacher knows when to allow some bending of the rules. Perhaps it is part of wisdom to question whether and when highly controlled lines are necessary in an elementary school.